



**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE:  
3:30 p.m. July 31, 2002**

**CONTACT:** Liza Cardinal, WestEd  
(415) 615-3219  
[lcardin@wested.org](mailto:lcardin@wested.org)  
Ilene Hertz, WestEd  
(408) 299-1703  
[ihertz@wested.org](mailto:ihertz@wested.org)  
Karen A. Blinstrub, CFFC  
(408) 289-5330

### **COMMUNITY CELEBRATES NEW INSTITUTE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Children and Families First Commission of Santa Clara County and WestEd Partner to Create Pioneering Institute Focused on Improving Quality Child Care in Santa Clara County*

(SAN JOSE, CA) – The Children and Families First Commission of Santa Clara County (CFFC) and WestEd, a nonprofit research, development and service agency, today held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the opening of the Santa Clara Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development. The Institute, housed at WestEd's new San Jose office, is the first program in Santa Clara County dedicated to supporting and strengthening early childhood professional development through education, recruitment and financial incentives which will ultimately benefit young children in licensed child care programs.

“Our Commission is responding to the community's need for more quality child care providers,” said Blanca Alvarado, chair of the CFFC. “This pioneering Institute pulls together the many resources of our large community for the benefit of young children and their families. WestEd's groundbreaking, research-based knowledge of early childhood development makes it an ideal partner to help our County's youngest children reach their greatest potential in school and in life.”

The Institute is the first comprehensive program in Santa Clara County that provides early child care professionals with expanded educational opportunities that will raise quality standards and provide young children with stable and nurturing care. The Institute's innovative approach to enhancing the skills and educational levels of child care professionals centers on building and maintaining solid, strategic relationships with local children's service agencies, community colleges, universities and the corporate community.

**(more)**

The Institute is helping to create and advocate a system of affordable, high quality child care throughout Santa Clara County. As part of this system, the Institute is implementing the Compensation and Retention Encourage Stability (CARES) program. Through CARES, yearly stipends will be awarded to qualifying Santa Clara County child care professionals based on educational attainment and longevity in the field. This year, 2,615 local child care providers have already received financial awards totaling more than \$3 million from CARES.

A growing body of research shows that quality child care is connected to the educational levels child care professionals achieve. Child care experts have also cited that low pay and few benefits make it difficult for child care workers in Santa Clara County to stay in the field and provide consistent care for young children. There are more than 7,500 child care facilities in Santa Clara County serving more than 45,000 children.

“Santa Clara County’s understanding of the needs of young children and commitment to early childhood educators and their professional development is remarkable and exemplary,” said Yolanda Garcia, director of the Santa Clara Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, WestEd. “Through the Institute and CARES, we have a unique opportunity to strengthen and support the early childhood workforce in Santa Clara and examine and resolve issues of access to professional development.”

The Children and Families First Commission of Santa Clara County was established after voters passed Proposition 10 in November 1998, adding a 50 cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, child care and other programs to promote early childhood development for children through age 5. The Commission receives approximately \$25 million annually for programs that meet local needs.

WestEd, a nonprofit research, development and service agency, works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity and improve learning for children, youth and adults. While WestEd serves the states of Arizona, California, Nevada and Utah as one of the nation's Regional Educational Laboratories, the agency's work extends throughout the United States and abroad. The agency has 16 offices nationwide, from Washington and Boston to Arizona, Southern California and its headquarters in San Francisco.